DEPARTMENT OF STATE CLIMATE AND ATMOSPHERIC PROGRAMS

The Department of State (DOS) plays an active role in international climate/meteorological policy making as a result of the growing worldwide concern with global environmental issues, including the depletion of the stratospheric ozone layer and climate change. The role of DOS has principally revolved around preparation and negotiation of the United States position in three fora: (1) the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, (2) the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); and (3) negotiation under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC). In addition, over the past few years the DOS has played a central and active role in the development and implementation of a number of international science and technology initiatives including the Group on Earth Observations, the Carbon Sequestration Leadership Forum, the International Partnership for the Hydrogen Economy, the Methane-to-Markets Partnership, and Generation IV (a U.S.-led program working on new fission reactor designs that will be safer, more economical and secure).

Stratospheric ozone depletion has been recognized as a critical health and environmental problem for more than a decade. Under DOS leadership, the United States worked to negotiate international agreements to phase out ozone-depleting substances, which should lead to a recovery of the ozone layer in the next century. To date, these treaties have been signed and ratified by more than 170 countries (including the United States). These countries represent 99 percent of the world's production of ozone depleting substances.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which was established by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), held its first session in 1988. This organization serves as a government forum to assess scientific, technical and socioeconomic information relevant for the understanding of climate change, its potential impacts and options for adaptation and mitigation.. In doing so, the Panel draws on the expertise of thousands of scientists and technical experts. The IPCC is currently organized into three working groups, which examine (1) the state of the science, (2) impacts and adaptation, and (3) mitigation. The IPCC released its first and second assessment reports in 1990 and 1995, respectively, and a third assessment report from each of the working groups was published in 2001. The fourth assessment report, due in 2007, is currently under preparation. In addition to preparing assessment reports, the IPCC also contributes to international negotiations through preparation and review of special reports and development of methodologies requested by the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC).

The FCCC was negotiated beginning in February 1991; the Convention was open for signature in Rio de Janeiro at the Earth Summit in June 1992. As of May 2004, it had been ratified by 189 countries, including the United States. The ultimate objective of the Convention is to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human-induced) interference with the climate system. It states that such a level should be achieved within a timeframe sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened, and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner. The Convention calls for all countries to develop inventories of their emissions and sinks of greenhouse gases and calls upon developed countries and economies in transition to aim to return these emissions to their 1990 levels by the year 2000.

In December 1997, Parties to the Convention adopted the Kyoto Protocol, which commits developed countries to reducing their collective emissions of greenhouse gases by at least 5 percent by the period 2008-2012. Following Russian ratification in late 2004, the Kyoto Protocol entered into force in February 2005. In early 2001, the United States announced that it would not ratify the Kyoto Protocol. The United States approach to addressing the challenge of climate change harnesses the power of markets and technological innovation. It also holds the promise of a new partnership with the developing world and it recognizes that climate change is a complex, long-term challenge that will require a sustained effort over many generations.

Today the United States is actively engaged in addressing climate change through the Convention, through a wide range of international science and technology initiatives, through multilateral efforts such as the Asia-Pacific Partnership for Clean Development and Climate and bilateral partnerships with 14 countries including Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, India, Italy, Japan, and other countries. Together these initiatives will help improve our global capability to understand and address issues associated with climate change in a manner that supports

broader sustainable development goals.

In addition to its primary role in the fora listed above, DOS is active in several relevant interagency processes, including the Committee on Environment and Natural Resources (CENR) of the National Science and Technology Council and the Interagency Working Group on Climate Change Science and Technology (IWGCCST). The CENR was established in 1993 to coordinate scientific domestic programs. Created in 2002, the IWGCCST is a sub-Cabinet level group that reviews all programs that contribute to climate change science and technology. Furthermore, while the emphasis on global environmental issues is a key new component of the department's focus, traditional DOS responsibilities, described in earlier Federal plans, continue. These include, but are not limited to, international aspects of food policy, disaster warnings and assistance, WMO and UNEP activities, and international meteorological programs.